

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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### BY RIGHT OF SUCCESSION.

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#### CHAPTER LVIII. HUNTING FOR PROOF.

MR. BLACKSTON'S office looked very cheerful in the winter-time. Mrs. Gordon had thought so when she had first come to look after her property and the family lawyer who was to assure her that there was no flaw in her title. Now her son sat in the same room trying to discover the flaw and anxious to find the way of making the enjoyment of James Gordon's property impossible.

What would have been his mother's feelings had she known the reason why Austin had ridden out so early, merely saying, as he left the dining-room, that he might not be home for luncheon!

"Poor dear Austin, I am afraid he finds this place rather dull," said the widow, as she watched her son from the window. "I wish he would express some decided views about a profession, though, of course, it would be a little difficult to find the money for anything that was very expensive, for now there is Minnie's affair. Really, when one's daughters marry off so quickly it is most perplexing."

"Well, mother," said Frances, "Austin must marry an heiress, and that will solve the difficulty; an heiress with a place. Austin wouldn't make a bad squire, I think, only he is too much up in the clouds sometimes. Really, last night he was no use in dancing—there were several ugly girls with whom the officers

would not dance—not even when I took one up and introduced her to him. I call it most ungentlemanly. By the way, what became of Henry Laurence? He disappeared suddenly; generally he is very good-natured. Do you know, Minnie?"

But, of course, Minnie did not know, and was soon engaged in important matters of her own, leaving Frances to entertain the visitors who lingered on, so that the eldest sister several times thought regretfully of the absent bride.

Mrs. Gordon, in her sitting-room upstairs, sat back in an easy-chair, resting from the fatigue of the previous day, and a smile parted her lips. She had succeeded in all her plans; if she had risked something, the result was decidedly good, and the future would now shape itself without her further interference. She must hurry on Minnie's wedding, and after that she would have leisure to consider what was to be done. To her own conscience she had merely represented her actions as necessary to avoid a public fuss, but afterwards there would be ways found of putting both herself and "those girls" in a better position. It merely wanted time for consideration, and till her own affairs were settled how could she give the necessary time for planning and thinking? Of course, she had not proved anything. All that would have led to proof was happily destroyed. Fire tells no tales. Bee and Austin both knew that the family lawyer, who was friendly to James Gordon's girls, had examined the diary and had found nothing important. So far all was right, and the future must solve its own difficulties.

Then followed less agreeable thoughts. How could she bear to reinstate—suppose future events turned out as they should

not turn out—the very girls she had managed to drive away? The thought was so utterly distasteful to her that she drove it away till a more convenient season, little guessing that at this very minute her son was in the lawyer's room carefully studying the red diary. Mrs. Gordon lamented that she had not told Austin everything before he had started on his travels; in that case he would have carefully avoided the Gordon girls and would never have fallen in love with Grace. Even on this point the widow had the unpleasant feeling that her wisdom had defeated its own ends.

Quickly and feverishly Austin turned over the leaves of the diary; he re-read some of the pages he had read before, then he sought backward and forward for a remembered paragraph, but it was not there; there was no mention of the actual marriage, and yet he felt certain that he had previously read the name of some church where the little bride had gone; but the name had entirely slipped his memory, and where was it now? No, it was not there; that fact at least was certain. Suddenly a terrible feeling swept over him—a feeling which, for the moment, seemed an agony quite unendurable, and which he would have given worlds to have blotted out. In vain, it overwhelmed him; it seemed to scorch his brain. He and Beatrice had previously handled this diary, so had their mother and Mr. Blackston; no one else. Austin paused in this train of thought—a pause where words failed him. He sought everywhere for a solution, but uselessly; he tried to believe that he had dreamed about the London church, tried to fancy that the wish was father of the remembrance; but he had to reject the idea. He could not recall the name, but he felt sure he had seen some church mentioned.

All this time he silently held the diary and read on, holding the book calmly enough, whilst Mr. Blackston considerably wrote on at his table, attending to quite another matter.

Round and round spun the thought: "No one but you four have touched this book. Some leaves were out of it before; some more have followed them. Who has tampered with this book?"

That was the question which was forced upon him; then again he reproached himself for accusing any one, especially for daring to accuse the only one of the four who must have wished to hide

the clue. What proof had he? None whatever.

After a long pause, Austin at last closed the diary and returned it to the lawyer.

"Thank you, Mr. Blackston. As you say, there is nothing there worthy of the name of proof in your eyes, I am sure; but to me there is so much simplicity in the narrative that it seems to convey a feeling that the person who wrote this was a woman who, at all events, believed herself to be James Gordon's lawful wife."

"I agree with you. My idea is that that miserable James Gordon must have gone through some form of marriage, in order to deceive the poor thing. He had great inducements not to marry this girl; his father swore that he should never own the Warren if he did so, and we know that he disowned her with his own lips."

"You will bear witness that we did our best to discover the mystery, Mr. Blackston," said Austin, smiling a little as if the question were half a joke.

"Certainly. Mrs. Gordon from the first did so, and your sister has behaved most nobly."

"Thank you," said Austin earnestly, as if some great boon had been accorded him, for now two ideas had taken possession of his entire being; he must find out what name was written in that diary, and he must hide his recent conviction from every one. His mother must never be disgraced through her children—through her only son—and yet justice, if possible, must be done; but how was this to be accomplished?

When he went home he wrote at once a letter to Beatrice, who, with her husband, had gone to the Lakes. In three days he would get an answer; and if all failed he must ask his mother for the missing leaf; but first he would try every means to save her from all pain.

The thought would have driven him almost mad, only he had one consolation. Suppose through him Grace should be righted; would he have to tell her how she had been kept out of her rightful place even for an hour? For to Austin, with his strict principles of honour, an hour seemed as dishonourable as a year.

"Whatever is the matter with you, Austin?" said Minnie, as she met her brother that afternoon, after he had ridden out far into the country lanes to allow himself time to think. "Why are you looking so glum?"

"The matter is that I mean to run up to London and see if I can't find something to do; I've had enough of weddings and fooleries."

Minnie looked at her brother in surprise; she had never heard him talk in this way before.

"It is just like you, Austin, not to enjoy the good fortune when it comes to you; you always had a contrary disposition."

"Idleness is all very well for women."

"I think you might stay over the new year; it is so inconvenient not having a man to take one about to parties."

"I wish we had never seen a penny of James Gordon's money. What good has it done us?"

"All the good in the world, of course. I am sure I don't wish to go back to the drudgery of abject poverty."

Austin had not thought enough of what his sisters had gone through. Certainly he ought not to find fault with them now, when all the spare money of the family had been put aside for his education. Now he was planning with all his might and main to deprive them of what they considered lawfully their own. But did they all think this; did his mother think so? The thought was torture. Anyhow, he meant to go away, though he must first wait for Bee's letter. Perhaps she would remember, or she would declare at once that no such thing had been in the diary, and that he had merely conjured up the whole thing.

In the meantime he must behave as a natural being; instead of doing so, he found himself studying his mother's face, and trying to read there the secret he wished to discover. Did she or did she not know the truth, and had she abstracted a leaf out of that diary? This was the plain question in plain words, but what was the answer?

At last Bee's answer arrived. Her first page was devoted to singing Colin's praises and telling her brother how very, very happy she was; life was too perfect and it almost frightened her; then, as if it were of no consequence, she added: "I think I remember that that poor lady did mention a church where she was married, but I am not positive, and I cannot be sure. Still, of course, it could not have been of importance, as Mr. Blackston saw it and said so. I am beginning to think that James Gordon was a wicked wretch. Imagine Colin ever behaving like that to me," and there the name of her husband started her off again

on a new road of panegyrics. Her Christmas letters to her mother and sisters were much in the same strain, so that Minnie scornfully remarked that Bee would soon become as great a bore as her husband.

Austin now recognised that he must expect no help from Bee; there was no loophole left for him but to ask his mother point-blank the question. How could he bring himself to do this? Every filial feeling of love and respect rose against it; but what was his duty? What was right? Could he accuse her? And if she were innocent—she must be—what would her feelings be to be thus questioned by her son? But if guilty—she could not be—what could she say?

He paused, reconsidered, hesitated, and finally did nothing.

Christmas came and went. The Warren household made themselves popular by giving a servants' dance, and unpopular by distributing beef, coals, and tea to the cottagers round about, and leaving out several of them by mistake. The village feud thus begun promised to rage till the holy season came round again. Minnie declared that poor people were very "ungrateful and horrid," and Frances for once agreed with her sister. Austin was silent.

Every evening he tried to force his memory as to the name of that London church, but out of those hundreds which was it? Then the date was gone, and without any clue how could he find out?

One evening as he was sitting alone in the library, pretending he must get through some reading, he was startled by the door being very gently opened and by seeing his mother enter with her noiseless footstep.

"Mother," he said, starting up as if surprised, "do you want something?" There was a calmness and decision about Mrs. Gordon which almost defied suspicion.

"Don't move, Austin. I wanted to ask you about what you said to Minnie; she repeated it this morning, and I have been thinking deeply since that. Perhaps you are right, and as soon as the Christmas holidays are over we should try to find some post for you—something you would like; and don't let the want of money hinder you, dear boy."

"Thank you, mother; you have always done the best you could for me; but I shall certainly find something now for myself if I look about. I shall look out for a tutorship if I hear of nothing better; but as to money, I have a little still left. Mr. Jones was so generous."

"You always were so careful, dear boy; but that is really unnecessary now. I shall give you a cheque for twenty pounds to-morrow for your London expenses. You might go and stay with some friends, and take your time to look about."

"Yes, I think I had better do that; but I do not need the money; keep it for the girls."

"Ah! dear Minnie! Yes, her engagement is all I can wish. So fortunate that she did not fancy that young Laurence! He was here so often, I half feared it might come to something, and really he is such a bear, and his position in consequence is not what it should be in the county. Not that I should have opposed Minnie's wishes; you know I always leave my children to do as they like in these matters, except when they fly in the face of true happiness and cannot see the obstacle."

"You still believe in the obstacle in my path?"

"Poor Austin, my poor boy, you don't know how I grieve for you; how I wish it could have been otherwise; but surely by this time you have come round to think with me. You agree with your mother that the thing is an impossibility?"

"Then you see no way out of the difficulty, mother?"

Mrs. Gordon shook her head, and then she turned the conversation and went on about other matters, all the while talking as if she were consulting her son, little guessing that on his lips the words hovered:

"Mother, did you do it?" But no, he dared not say them, so he also went on talking about ordinary matters.

That evening Austin sat up very late over the dying embers. The more he thought the less he saw any way out of his troubles, and the hope which a possible solution had brought back to his mind was harder to bear than hopelessness. Was it simply to prevent him marrying Grace that his mother had done this thing? If so, would the fault rest upon him as well? Why had he not been firm and determined all through? Why had he wavered? Perhaps his cowardice had been the cause of his mother's sin! The clock struck one before he thought of moving. A stillness reigned all through the house, and as he went slowly upstairs he fancied that he was a stranger in his mother's house—that some curse lay upon him and his. If this evil had been committed, surely there was a

curse upon them. This was not his home, but the home of James Gordon's children.

He walked on almost stealthily, till on reaching the door of what had been Bee's room, he felt impelled to open the door and to enter. In one corner there still stood the old bureau. How well he remembered his sister standing by it and holding out that small red book, begging him to read it! He went up to the bureau and tried the lock; it was fastened so that he could not open it. Then he sat down and again tried to recall the evening of the discovery. Both he and Bee had then believed in its truth, but how easily had they been made to change their minds when their mother had taken the matter in hand! He saw it quite plainly now; a new light broke upon him. She had every inducement to deny it. Why had he let the book out of his own hands, and why had he lost his temper over his own grievances?

In this mood Austin crept out of the room, and went to bed and to sleep. In his dreams his mind still ran in the same grooves; he seemed to be once more handling the old worn diary, and to be turning over the faded pages of the manuscript. Then the writing gradually became clearer; he began reading the very words, then the account of the wedding, then suddenly he saw the name of the church clearly written down—St. Nathaniel in the City. With a start of surprise and a cry, he woke up, and sat up in bed repeating the words. He was awake, he was not dreaming now. He sprang from bed, lit a candle, and wrote down the name. He would go at once and examine the registers of that church himself, and then the truth or the falsehood of it must be discovered. After a long waiting he went back to bed, but not to sleep.

At breakfast he looked more cheerful, as he announced quietly that he meant to go to London that day, and might find something to suit him.

"I hope you will find something to please you, dear," said his mother, smiling, with no suspicion of the truth. When he was ready she kissed him affectionately, and there was true gladness in her face. He was still free, and she was still first with him. If only he would let her manage his life for him, he should have no reason to regret it; but as Austin returned the kiss he almost said, "Mother, tell me you did not tear that leaf out?"

London was in one of its worst atmo-



spheric moods that day. All was dark and foggy when Austin stepped out upon the Waterloo platform. There was nothing to tempt one to linger, and certainly business was his only object as he hurried on through the City.

Here the fog was denser and more unbearable; but Austin hardly noticed it, he was too much excited to care about the weather. He wanted to reach his destination at once; he wanted to know; but there were difficulties to be encountered before he could find the right man to open the right church door and to let him examine the registers.

"It be years ago what you wants, sir," said the clerk, taking down some dirty folios from the vestry shelf. "In those days we had couples married by the dozen, sir. The string of names that was called out of a Sunday morning took quite a time reading. They do say that now and then the couples could not be sorted. But, lor', sir! now the folks goes and gets married elsewhere. They are all warehouses here now, and the masters live in the country. I call it a shame to do us out of all the fees."

"I suppose in those old days there were not many questions asked by the clergyman?"

"Lor', no! he had enough to do to join 'em all up without asking questions."

Austin was feverishly turning over the pages of the big book; there were no leaves out here, at all events, but he did not know the year, and the bad cramped writing was enough to puzzle even an expert. The old sexton began to get impatient; it was terribly cold and he had bad rheumatics.

"What name be you wanting, sir? Maybe I can help you."

"I want the name of Gordon. That was the gentleman's name; the lady's name I do not know."

"Be you sure it was here she was married, sir? These old churches do get queer parties tied together, and most on 'em are crazy to part afterwards."

Austin was sure of nothing, but he would not own this, and patiently continued hunting for the name of Gordon.

"The parson at that time wasn't plain with his pen," continued the sexton, stamping his feet to keep warm; "but our present minister writes like a sign-post."

"It is not here," said Austin at last, with a sigh.

"Gordon," repeated the old man, taking

the book. "Maybe it isn't here, and yet I seem to mind some such name once. Some of the names get a bit squeezed in, but the names is more fixtures than the people, I say. Look here, what be this scratch? Yes, there it is; I took notice of it once because it's that badly written that I wondered who ever could make it out; but it ain't ever been enquired for before."

Yes, there was the name, which, with some difficulty, Austin now made out. It told him that in this church James Gordon, bachelor, had lawfully wedded Grace Giberna, spinster.

Austin could hardly go through the necessary form of feeing the sexton and copying the paragraph, and then once more he found himself in the street. The fog was even more disagreeable than before, and the City wore its most desolate aspect.

For a little time he walked on without thinking of his road. In fact, he was aiming at no special point, though he chose the streets almost unconsciously which led towards Audley Street. There it was he wished to go; there he would at least be welcomed if he brought this news. But a difficulty presented itself to him. How could he reveal the truth without condemning his mother? This was his difficulty, and the very thought of her overpowered his joy for Grace. He had always in a way looked up to his mother, chiefly because she had never thwarted him, and he had never analysed her real motives; but now the truth had gradually come upon him that his mother had stooped to—well, deceit, or was it merely delay of righting the innocent, rather than run the risk of losing her new fortune? That hateful money! Now it was no longer theirs, and what they had spent of it they must somehow or other return. And Grace? It was only at this moment that Grace suddenly appeared to him in a new light; not the poor, unknown, hard-working Grace of Unterberg, but Grace the heiress of the Warren. Still, what would that matter? She knew, and others might, if they cared to enquire, that he had wooed her poor and would try to win her rich; he would not let false notions of honour come between him and his happiness. But there was another obstacle. How could he put his mother's conduct in a light which would prevent the discovery of what had taken place?

When he reached No. 19 he paused, fearing to face that real Miss Evans; but

surely his message was enough passport for him. So, taking his courage in his two hands, he rang the bell. The same maid opened the door to him, and he tried to look quite unconscious as he asked if Miss Evans were at home.

"Yes, sir," she said hesitatingly.

"Would you tell her that a gentleman wishes to see her for a few moments?"

"What name, sir?"

"You need not give any name."

"Miss Evans said if you called again, sir, I was not to let you in."

Austin felt as if he had received a sharp blow.

"But I must see her for a few moments," he faltered.

"I'm sure it's no good, sir," said the resolute maiden. "Miss Evans never alters her mind."

Austin turned and fled. What else could he do? But his pleasure was spoilt, and what was worse, he felt that he could not write all that he wished to say; he dared not put upon paper anything which might afterwards serve as a witness against his mother.

In this perplexity Austin Gordon sought out a quiet hotel not far from Miss Evans' house, and spent the night in trying to find a solution to his difficulty.

### A MODERN UTOPIA.

It was to have been indeed an Arcadia, our modern Utopia; a place of sweetness and light, of plain living and high thinking, of strict Puritan morality, yet instinct with the grace and beauty of art. It was to have been what the great spirits of the past would have chosen for their ideal home, the promised land which they eagerly desired to see but never lived to see. It was to be the home of an ideal faith, while accepting and propagating the severest truths of science. With all this it was to be so framed as to provide for the general maintenance by the general labour of the community, apportioning to each member his or her share in the general fund according to the honest labour of mind or body which the individual had contributed to the store.

It was nothing to the purpose that experiments in the way of new social foundations had never hitherto met with much success—no, not even in America, where there is greater scope for such develop-

ments, and where people are more easily moved to make trial of them than in the fossilised countries of old Europe. Most people who have read Hawthorne's "Blithedale Romance" must have felt an interest in the social experiment it commemorates—a sort of co-operative farm, in which labour and its results were to be shared by a cultivated community of men and women. But each generation has its peculiar hopes and illusions, and in our own time we have seen the rise and spread of ideas which seek an outlet in some new form of social organisation.

Many people may have lived through these latter years, flattering themselves on possessing some acquaintance with the literature and ideas of the period, and yet may not have made the acquaintance of a book called "Looking Backwards," which is not an essay in favour of a reversion to old models, as one might judge from its title, but an effort to construct an ideal state of the future, from which advanced position you look back upon the dismal follies of our present civilisation. Whatever the merits of the book may be, it has been, in its way, an epoch-making volume. And among persons who have "ideas," the existence will be recognised of a new sect—not in a religious sense, for its members are bound by no common creed of that kind—but a sect of practical idealists, who do not so much try to move the world as to create a world of their own in which to carry out their notions. Not that these notions are in any way wild or fanatical, any more than are the holders of them, who are generally people of culture and refinement; not capitalists, by any means, but rather such as serve them, perhaps not very willingly, as ministers, teachers, struggling members of professions, with others brought up to agriculture, but with more wit than money; but, whatever they may be, owning the same currents of thought, and seeking some kind of outlet in the way of carrying them out. The followers of this kind of cultus are more numerous in America, where they have acquired the name of "nationalists," but they are scattered about, too, over England; and if one had happened to meet with people of that way of thinking within the last few years, sooner or later one would hear the mystic word Kaweah!

Kaweah, in fact, is Utopia—a realisation of the excellent and humane principles of the new philosophy which is to replace the cruel "struggle for existence," which

modern science has conjured forth, like some ill-conditioned demon, from its crucibles, by a more rational and wiser plan. Speaking geographically, the colony of Kaweah is situated on a fine mountain plateau of the Pacific slope of the splendid territory of California, in the valley of Los Angeles, in Tulare County. To the marvellous prosperity of the district local statistics bear witness. In 1879 the assessments on land and property figured up to a little over five millions. In 1889 they reached a total of over twenty-four millions. Certainly there has been a check in this development, and the far ahead American will contemptuously designate the state as a "busted boom"; but the progress made has been retained. Nor is it to be wondered at, for here is one of the fairest, most favoured spots on the earth's surface.

No more suitable spot could have been chosen for a new experiment in living, for all the conditions of life were there eminently favourable. A splendid climate prevailed on the fine plateau, where the founders of the colony obtained an adequate grant of land. The land was finely timbered, with lovely, fertile nooks and rich pasture. A rapid river dashed past, brawling among boulders and rocky strata marked with mineral veins, or beneath cliffs of rich marble or solid limestone. All kinds of fruit-trees grew and ripened their fruit in the neighbourhood, the vine, the orange, and the peach among the rest. The park-like forest glades were fringed with flowering shrubs, and lovely wild flowers sprang up on every side. The forest that stretched around promised abundance of timber, which the colonists fondly believed they had acquired the right to fell, and not far off were groups of those giant trees which are the wonder of California and of the world. There were deer, too, in the forests, and quail abounded on the uplands, while bear, badgers, and wild cats were not unknown, and their existence added a spice of adventure to the hunters' progress.

Altogether the environments of the new settlement were nearly akin to an earthly paradise, and more intimate acquaintance did not dispel the charm. In winter, so called, the nights were cold, but the days were bright and genial; sometimes a light frost whitened the levels as the morning sun rose bright and glorious over the plain, and in the remoter heights of the sierras snow was constantly present. But except for the short season of the periodic rains,

perennial sunshine reigned, with bright skies and a genial temperature, tempered in summer with cool breezes from the mountains. Life would not appear to be hard in a climate where a canvas tent is sufficient protection at any season of the year, and where, so pure and dry is the air, it is no great hardship to wrap yourself in your blanket, when belated far from home, and sleep in the open air. In fact, the founders of Kaweah found the climate, as one might say, "just" too lovely. Life seemed to be meant for one long picnic.

The new settlement was started in 1887, and then consisted of about five hundred members, who shared the same views, and were more or less connected by previous friendship or interchange of correspondence. For future members the qualification was to be a similar correspondence in views on social matters, summarised in the Koran of the settlement—the volume known as "Looking Backwards"—and as a fair contribution to the common stock, the sum of about a hundred pounds, of which a fifth must be paid before the neophyte joined the settlement. The remaining sum might be liquidated either in cash or labour. The society had thus many outlying members who contributed to its funds with the intention of ultimately joining the colony. But it was a rule that no new member should become a settler without a "call" from the directors. In due time the settlers arrived—some from England, the majority from the Eastern States of America, after a long and expensive journey—and established themselves in a kind of extempore city consisting chiefly of canvas-covered huts some seven feet by eleven, while sites were marked out for more permanent habitations, each colonist being allotted a plot of land fifty-five yards square for house and garden. The family and female element was strong from the very first, and the women of the colony formed its most successful element. They worked hard from the first to make the place habitable and life pleasant, planting gardens, cooking, baking, picking and canning fruit, and when work was finished, organising parties and entertainments, of which music and dancing formed a chief part. The directors of the colony were elected in general meeting, and naturally those chosen were in the first instance the original leaders of the movement, while as naturally parties came into existence who questioned the directing power of the di-

rectorate, and formed a pretty powerful opposition.

A good deal depended on the directorate, with whom it rested to assign to each member of the community his proper function; to make A the editor of the weekly newspaper, to set B at work composing type, while C was despatched to join the road gang. The latter was the lot most likely to befall the able-bodied young man, for the making of a grand highway was to be the first work of the new colony. From that it is easy to see that one of the leading spirits was an engineer. It would have been almost better for the colony, as it happened, had he been a shoemaker, and had set all his friends to work at making shoes. But the schemes of the directorate were on a more grandiose scale. The Government grant to the colony included, it was assumed, a valuable tract of timber, and to fell and square this timber, and by means of a saw-mill—for which there was abundant water-power—to convert the timber into boards, seemed to offer the most profitable and satisfactory outlet for the labour of the colony. There was abundant demand for timber in the settlements in the plains beneath, but from the mountain plateau of Kaweah the existing track was absolutely impracticable.

Now road-making is about the roughest and coarsest work imaginable; and to set any considerable number of trained and educated men to such a task is equivalent to "cutting blocks with a razor," and a pretty severe test of the strength and goodwill of the colonists. But on the whole they stood the test famously. Working on hard fare, and with meagre comforts about them, the men of Kaweah accomplished their task; no light one, for at places the road was cut out of the face of the rock, and every yard was gained by severe and exhausting labour.

While this was going on the organisation of the colony proceeded apace. There was plenty of organisation—perhaps, if anything, a little too much—with departments charged with the carrying out of various duties: a washing and mending bureau, for instance, with a lady superintendent; and a transportation department, with Jem Bellah for superintendent and head teamster—a capital fellow, Jem, with notions of the crispest and driest character. Money did not circulate in the colony, but all labour done for the community was requited by a cheque drawn on time,

that is, showing the number of hours' labour given, and convertible into necessities of life at the general stores. Headquarters comprised stores and offices, with recreation rooms, and a central hall for the general meetings, surrounded by the weatherboarded mansions of the leading colonists. On Saturday afternoons the various labour gangs knocked off work, and there was a general rush for the settlement, sometimes from quarters a dozen miles or more away, and then a social evening would follow with songs and recitations, followed by dancing, which was kept up till midnight.

There were unquiet spirits, of course, with schisms and secessions, which gave rise to heated discussions and exciting episodes. But, on the whole, the colonists were loyal to their self-elected rulers, and obstinate rebels were expelled and cast into outer darkness—that is, as long as the directorate inspired public confidence. But, in truth, hard times were coming upon Kaweah, and a fate which it had little deserved was imminent, for it turned out that the timber claims, to which the colonists had every reason to believe they were entitled under their grant, and which, in effect, were to provide them with subsistence, were not recognised by the Government. The truth seems to be, that as a presumed "socialist" experiment the colony was not in good odour with the powers that be, while it was decidedly obnoxious to the private adventure "lumbering" or timber-felling companies which were its neighbours and competitors. Nor had it any powerful capitalists at its back to secure its concessions or oil the administrative wheels. And if the colonists could not cut their timber reserves, what was the use of the road that had been engineered and cut with such expenditure of labour? It was useful in a way, but they could not cut it into chunks and eat it, and as their energies had been directed into that line instead of the more obvious one of raising sufficient produce of all kinds for their own support, a general feeling of mistrust arose which was intensified when the law courts decided against the colonists, and a detachment of United States cavalry was marched into the district to prevent them from cutting any more timber. Kaweah is small, Uncle Sam is big—it is all very well to appeal to public opinion, and to send the hat round for subscriptions; but if we are to support ourselves at all, is it not time to begin?



Such seems to have been the feeling among the colonists in general, and a kind of revolution followed, the old directorate resigned with one prominent exception, and were replaced by others who had acquired the confidence of their fellow-colonists, hitherto untried men and women, in whose hands rests the future history of Kaweah.

But it is not fair to characterise the experiment, as some have done, as a "ghastly failure." As a social scheme it seems to have been a distinct success. During the four years it has been in existence no single crime or misdemeanour has sullied the record of the colony, no case of drunkenness or theft.

Those who have shared its life and were of a social, "clubbable" disposition, speak gratefully of the pleasant time they have spent with friendly, congenial souls; while those who have stuck to the ship, who have remained in the colony and do not mean to quit, are determined to make a success of it. Not so much on the old lines of "lumbering," though if they can get timber to "lumber" they do not mean to neglect that; but by careful and thorough cultivation of the soil they hope to succeed where more ambitious schemes have failed. Tomatoes and melons thrive wonderfully with irrigation, and other fruits in their kinds may be expected to make a good show. Alfalfa, a kind of clover, may be raised. Potatoes make a good crop; and various kinds of corn will be useful for home consumption.

At the same time a good deal of sympathy must be felt for the original leaders of the movement, who have worked hard for its success, and who now find themselves deserted by their followers, disappointed in their hopes, and convinced that they have spent their strength for naught; and it is only natural that they should cry "harrow and alack"! and complain of the quality of the forces which they have failed to lead to victory. Thus we are told that Kaweah completed its parallel with honest Gonzalo's ideal state:

No occupation; all men idle, all.

We are told that in lumbering generally, timber-felling, that is, and wood-sawing, the men of Kaweah showed themselves deficient, greatly preferring argument to work, and debate to actual log-rolling. And where the wish is father to the thought, this is held to show that associated labour of a voluntary kind is out of the question; that, in fact, the crack and smart of the

whip, as well as the rattle of the wheels, is absolutely necessary to keep the team up to the collar. But the example does not show as much as that; and then the story is as yet only half told. Let us wait till the end is reached before we try to draw a moral from it.

## TALL TALK.

TALL talk has many aliases. According to your humour you may call it a lie, a misstatement, an error, an exaggeration, misrepresentation, or even a mere fib, which, as every one knows, is the feminine for that objectionable word "lie." It is the sort of thing at which you laugh distractedly, or lift your eyebrows in righteous surprise and reproof—again, according to your humour. For we are such variable creatures, so anomalous from head to foot, that what we think "perfectly delightful" or "quite too killing" one day, we may four-and-twenty hours later term "a patent and intolerable falsehood."

There is unconscious as well as intentional tall talk. Who does not know the sweet specimens of the former to be found in Continental hotels, or in books written in a language with which the author is not discreetly familiar? Here is an advertisement from Italy, Englished by the hotel secretary, which is but one of many current in the peninsula:

"The Hôtel de —, the very most favourite resort by English and American travellers, as during the winter present all kinds of comfort for what concerns the general heating, during the summer is just fit to afford the freshest and the most wholesome temperature on account of special position, breadth and ventilation, the largest and most monumental table d'hôte there is to be found."

There is no denying that the stature of such an advertisement is, to use an expressive American phrase, "pretty considerable." It is a hecatomb of superlatives; and yet it can hardly help defeating its own ends. Such a nice "derangement of epithets" would surely excite the suspicion of even a tallow-chandler's wife, on tour with her husband for the first time after their retirement from tallow-chandlery.

Here is another jewel of a sentence, this time from the pen of a Florida journalist, in praise of life in Palatka, a pleasant young city on the St. John's River:

"The hotels in the Gem City (a synonym for Palatka) are world-renowned. The epicure lives in Palatka, figuratively, in the land of milk and wild honey. Here the spiritual and physical man may enjoy life correlatively. Here the loftiest heroism and the birth of genial and pleasurable emotions may be enjoyed over the dinner table 'ad libitum,' and the heart and soul of man be refreshed with a satiety not convenient at all times."

Is it not charming? I should think it served its purpose to perfection, and yet no one would be deceived by it. If ever a man was "refreshed with a satiety" it must have been our dear friend the journalist upon this occasion; and the operation of the satiety may be seen in his report—as fine a derangement of ideas, not epithets, as ever tickled the wicked soul of a critic. What would the immortal Dr. Blair have said to such a piece of prose?

There is also the tall talk of the man or (more often) the woman of sentiment. With what alluring touches is the description of that somewhat commonplace thing, a girl's face, compounded! The writer sees a vast deal more in the pretty face than does its owner, and more than this need not perhaps be said. If the little heroine does but shed a tear from gaping, how our friend pounces upon the exuded tear-drop to make it serve, willy nilly, as the occasion of a subtle page or two of mental analysis! Though so fair to look upon, and outwardly so happy, the damsel is gnawed by corroding sorrows, of which the cruel world wots not and in which it takes no interest. Then may follow a masterly reference to the universal law, whereby no one man or woman is essentially more or less happy than any other man or woman. The damsel's tear-drop has been found heavy enough to counterpoise her blitheness and girlish beauty.

As a matter of fact, however, we could ill dispense with much of the tall talk current in the world. Our perverted appetites crave for it. Speech and literature of Spartan conciseness would become dreadfully tame and tedious if we were condemned to suffer it for more than an hour or two. I know well that there are men who already practise this laconic mode of intercourse with their fellows. If they are asked a question which may tempt them into fluency, they answer it merely with a conscientious "yes" or "no." Their own questions are always

serious, and they do their best so to frame them that their interlocutors may, like themselves, be spared waste of breath in the reply. I dare say it is possible for the mind to live upon monosyllables, even as the body may hold together upon a monotonous diet of milk. But surely in the end it is bound to bring on mental starvation or atrophy—a dire and fatal affliction.

Dryden, in discussing the use of obsolete words, once said that, in his opinion, they may be "laudably revived when either they are more sounding or more significant than those in practice." The use of tall talk in moderation may be excused on a parallel plea. There are times when one positively aches to get out of the radius of the actual—when the imagination is the best faculty in the service of man. We yearn to fancy at least that there are spheres of existence and possibilities out of the common round of our experience. If the bell rings when we are in this humour, and Splendide Mendax, who has been everywhere and seen nearly everything, is announced, we hail him as if he were an archangel sent to assure us we are certain of Paradise. What does it matter if Mr. Splendide Mendax's reputation for veracity is not worth a pinch of snuff? We desire to be diverted, and there is an end of it. So we offer him a cigar, fix him in the most comfortable arm-chair, and implore him to begin. He, nothing loth, opens with a stereotyped preamble:

"I was in India in '79, you know"; or, "in Pegu in the winter of '68, and a preciously odd thing happened to me. Did I ever tell you about it? No? Well, then, I will."

And he does. It is an atrocious lie from middle to end; but what of it? Were the romance writers of the pre-Cervantes period rogues and vagabonds all, meriting to be hung because they gave such very wild action to their knight-errants, their dragons, magicians, and distressed maidens? Not a bit of it. They may have turned two or three weak heads like that of our dearly-beloved Don Quixote. But they might have inoculated a whole province of Spain with utter craziness, and still the balance of their influence would have been on the laudable side. Do but think how our mediæval ancestors would have thrived for moral and spiritual nutriment if they had had no "Amadis de Gaul" and its kindred volumes to recur to in their leisure hours. It was before the time of Dr. Watts; but the doctor's plaintive little

verse about "Satan," and "mischief," and "idle hands," would bear strong application to their case. If you doubt it, read Froissart and Monstrelet. The chronicles of these amiable students of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries depict our forefathers in a very disagreeable way. Save for those picturesque disseminators of tall talk in love and war—the Troubadours—there would have been not one redeeming influence to touch their rough, unruly characters.

Speaking for myself, I have much sympathy with Splendide Mendax and his methods. I know how the electric current of exaggeration takes hold of a man's tongue when he sees he has fair opportunity of making himself—though for ever so short a time—regarded of the people or his auditors as a most interesting person. And really what does it matter to you or me, or the world, or even Mendax himself, whether he killed three lions with one bullet, as he says, or, as is more probable, missed all three lions—if he ever saw them—and trusted to his heels to save himself from their portentously long strides behind him?

I am not an apologist for indiscriminate lying. Heaven forbid! Indeed, if great or even small moral issues depended upon the minute veracity of one's tales of one's adventures, I would rather hold my tongue about them than attempt to square my conscience by speaking the strict truth—no more, no less. But where the matter is of no account, and the laugh is not likely to come in unless some licence is allowed, in the name of levity let man be permitted to romance a little.

According to Rogers the poet, Vernon was the person who invented the story about the lady being pulverised in India by a sunstroke. When he was dining there with a Hindoo, one of his host's wives was suddenly reduced to ashes, upon which the Hindoo rang the bell, and said to the attendant who answered it, "Bring fresh glasses, and sweep up your mistress."

Now I suppose no sensible person believes in the truth of this incident in Mr. Vernon's story; but would not the world be a trifle poorer if it had never been produced by the inventor's sportive fancy?

Indeed, there would be no novels and no fictitious literature of any kind, if we were to unite to ban all those of our fellows whose tongues ran off the straight line of truth. It would be no use making

a special exception on the behalf of romance writers. The slur would strike them, and they would give up their craft for something that better befitted the instincts of the age.

Really, however, the tendency to slight ideal Truth is by no means confined to such people as Splendide Mendax and the Punch caricaturists. Take this of the Earl of Chatham's, when he rose on the eighteenth of November, 1777, to make a speech in the House of Lords: "I rise, my lords, to declare my sentiments on this most solemn and serious subject. It has imposed a load upon my mind which I fear nothing can remove; but which impels me to endeavour its alleviation by a free and unreserved communication of my sentiments."

The occasion was no common one, and yet it is quite unlikely that even so wholehearted a statesman as the Earl of Chatham would feel the burden of it for very long, much less while life lasted in him. Apart from this, is there not a fine flavour of Johnsonian stately tall talk in these prefatory words of his? A volume of the Earl's letters to his nephew when a boy at school is before me at this moment; and there is the same sonorous diction here as in his speeches.

"I shall seek then," he writes, "every occasion, my dear young friend, of being useful to you, by offering you those lights which one must have lived some years in the world to see the full force and extent of, and which the best mind and clearest understanding will suggest imperfectly in any case, and in the most difficult, delicate, and essential points perhaps not at all, till experience, that dear-bought instructor, comes to our assistance."

A hundred years ago, our boys were, no doubt, more patient with their elders than they are in these days. But it seems almost beyond the range of chance that a boy in his teens would, in any epoch, welcome a course of letters like these of the great Earl, unless, indeed, they were usually accompanied by something specious and convertible as a "solatium." The above is a longish sentence for one adult to write to another adult; but unless he was a very good boy, I should not hope that any nephew of mine would be able to hold on to the end of it without losing his bearings.

Of all merry tall talk, perhaps some of the tallest is to be heard in the various little hostelrys throughout the land,

wherein anglers love to foregather, from early spring until the leaves begin to change their colour.

Their surroundings favour the habit in them. In glass cases on the four walls of the room you see big swollen fish of a size large enough, one would suppose, to occasion a sort of tidal wave in any stream into which their bodies might be recast. Of course nothing is less likely to happen than their return to the element whence they were taken. There they stand amid a tinfoil setting of weeds and rushes—an unfailing and brisk source of inspiration to the anglers themselves. In life, they were not so very much out of the common; but after death the innkeeper and two or three more have stuffed their luckless skins with sawdust till they are ready to burst from discomfort. What more easy than then to label them: "Seventeen pound trout caught on May Day, 1868;" or, "Pike, thirty-one pounds six ounces, taken by Mr. John Smith, in the Mill-Pool, Fishall, with a live minnow, after three-quarters of an hour's play." The mill-pool is within a mile of the inn. It is free to the clients of the host of the inn. If the corpse in the case do not serve as a stimulant to the novice it will, at least, in the time of his maturity, act as a precedent to excuse him for his swollen yarns after a day on the banks.

It is thus, over tobacco and whisky, that the great legendary pikes, weighing between one and two hundredweight, are created. Mr. Greenheart, a selfish middle-aged bachelor, whose life is an untiring hunt after pleasure, opens the ball with a brief but bright little story of fifteen trout which he caught in a Sutherlandshire loch with eight syllables to the name. He took them all in an hour, and they scaled exactly a hundredweight the fifteen. One hair out of his beard added to the fifteen fish, and the balance would have been altogether disturbed.

After that, we have the retired naval surgeon's story of the sea-serpent, which, "once upon a time," when he was serving on Her Majesty's frigate "Humdrum," followed the vessel for a whole week. This was much; but the real wonder lies in the further fact that periodically it lifted its head out of the water and opened a mouth into which a coach-and-four might have driven, without inconvenience to the high hat of the driver. Its tail was just visible through a telescope all the while, on the horizon line. That would make it

something more than twenty miles long—allowing for fogs. The retired naval surgeon has not the least doubt about the veracity of Pontoppidan on the same subject. But since Pontoppidan's time the sea-serpents have grown a good deal. It is only natural, since, with all our progress, we have never been able to catch a single one of them.

Some of the stories of the voracity of pike are also exacting. Take that, for example, of the fish weighing twenty-eight pounds, which, in 1765, was sold to a gentleman of Littleport for a guinea. The cook-maid, when she came to gut the fish, found "a watch with a black ribbon and two steel seals annexed," in the stomach. These proved, upon enquiry, to belong to a man who had been drowned six weeks previously, and whose body had, of course, been missing ever since.

Then, again, there is the Lilleshall pike, which weighed one hundred and seventy pounds, and was dragged from its bed in a drained pool by a number of men all pulling at the rope in opposition to the fish.

For real, unblushing mendacity it would seem difficult to beat the accomplished angler. And yet, who accounts it a sin in him? No one is deceived, except, perhaps, himself. So he tells the same yarns—grown bigger every year—wherever he goes; and the echo of them is passed on among the Sutherlandshire coaches and the Irish loughs, until at length it doubles back to its birthplace in some placid English county, by a clear trout-stream in a meadow yellow with cowslips, and then the very progenitor of its origin refuses to believe in it and laughs it to scorn.

A word in conclusion about culpable tall talk, a very different thing to the kinds of exaggeration already hinted at.

When among my more legitimate letters I see two or three neatly-folded papers, with the Post Office machine-stamp upon them, and a printed head-line above the stamp, I realise that here I am nearly sure to find myself face to face with some of the least excusable species of tall talk, exaggeration, misstatements, or downright lying.

It would not matter if the papers were sent round for the entertainment of the public merely. Then one could read them with just the same interest, though less in degree, than an American humorist of talent excites. But they are venomous snares for the innocent, the imaginative,



and the unwary; and the confiding recipient of the prospectus, in which he is promised at least forty per cent. interest per annum upon his investment in the company, may be warned away from the promoters as surely as if they were ticketed recruiting sergeants for destruction.

Our sisters, too, sin by the want of discrimination with which they exaggerate. If they would but enlarge upon the real only where no harm can come of it, then there would be no quarrel to fasten upon them in this matter. That, however, is where they seem to lack discernment. The wife who flies to her mother because her husband has said a hasty word, and who straightway charges him to the old lady with brutality and gross misuse, may there and then usher in a course of suffering which would not else have come upon her. The unmarried lady who, having obtained, at much cost, a morsel of gossip, neither profitable nor injurious to any one in its original form, puts layer upon layer of fiction over the germ to make it the more acceptable to her friends, is guilty of a crime from which our acquaintance, the retired naval surgeon, would shrink with well-bred, honourable disgust.

It is an awful thing to say, yet there is good warranty for it: these slayers of reputation are often as much guilty of homicide as the burglar who shoots a householder for coming between him and his burglarious designs.

## MISS METHUEN'S MASTERPIECE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

DE LASTRIN had barely left the studio before he deeply regretted the promise he had made to his cousin.

"I wish I had not gone there," he thought; "but as I did go, I wish I had been a little wiser than to interfere with her good opinion of herself. Certainly, it is a sore pity to see talent and energy such as hers running to waste, for Fusain is quite right—she has the makings of an artist—but she evidently doesn't want my advice, and why should I burden myself with a distasteful task? I think I had better let the matter rest where it is," and De Lastrin slashed viciously at the fallen leaves under the trees as he walked along the boulevards. But somehow or another he could not persuade himself to let the matter rest. The task he had imposed on

himself might be distasteful, yet he had almost a craving to perform it.

"Well, I suppose it was a sort of a promise," he said to himself, about ten days later, by way of justification for what he felt was weakness of mind; "and I suppose she was trying to remind me of it when she said so distinctly last night, in my hearing, that she should be at the studio this afternoon. I may as well go and get the business over and off my mind."

Yes, said Monsieur Fusain's servant, Miss Methuen was in the studio; would Monsieur le Marquis give himself the trouble to enter? Which he did, to find Miss Methuen standing, palette and brushes in hand, in front of an easel, busy "laying in" the first sketch of a roguish-faced Italian boy, who was her model on this occasion. She looked round with an air of indifference.

"I had given up expecting your promised visit," she said.

"It is possible," returned De Lastrin coolly, "for I have certainly been a long time collecting the courage necessary to the occasion."

"Do you intend, then," asked the girl in a bantering tone, "to make the occasion very formidable?"

"It is always formidable," he rejoined gravely, "to show clever people their weak points." Then he glanced at her work. "You said I was too vague in my remarks the other day," he continued, "so perhaps I had better begin by being very explicit."

"Certainly," rejoined Miss Methuen.

"Well, then," he began, "the first observation I will make is that you have made a totally false start there, and that nothing satisfactory will come of it. Then I will beg you to take a fresh canvas and set to work all over again."

"I think," said Miss Methuen sweetly, "that it would perhaps be better if you yourself would begin on the new canvas. I had far rather see what you mean about drawing or colouring from example than from precept. That will floor him," was her reflection; "he will have to confess himself beaten now."

But to her astonishment her cousin quietly accepted the challenge.

"If you wish it," he said, adjusting the easel and taking the palette with an air of familiarity which she little expected. "I could have explained while you worked, but you may be right in preferring example to precept."

A few minutes' work with the charcoal, a few dexterous touches with the brush, and he was fairly launched on the work, and Dora, with ever increasing surprise in her face, was watching him intently, and listening with deeper and deeper interest to his comments as he proceeded. Was this her cynical, blasé cousin, the man for whose pretensions she had felt herself filled with contempt?

"Oh, Gilbert!" she cried, when half an hour later he gave the model his congé, "oh, Gilbert, you are a real artist! I had no idea you could paint and teach like that. Where and when did you learn?"

"Oh, I had a fancy for such things in the days of my youth," was his quiet reply. "I studied for two or three years in Paris with Carolus Duran."

"You speak as if the days of your youth were centuries behind you," she said. He gave a few touches to a shadow on the cheek of his sketch, and made no reply. "Do you paint much?" she went on.

"I don't paint at all now," he answered.

"And why not?"

"It's no use. The world will get on just as well without the works of art I might produce."

"The world may," she rejoined, with an air of wisdom, "but you will not."

"I believe," he said drily, "that I had the same delusion myself once."

"It was not a delusion," said Dora earnestly.

There was a sense of satisfaction creeping over her that she was really going to influence this misanthrope after all. But instead of answering her he laid down his palette and brushes, and, resuming his matter-of-fact tone, said:

"This has been less vague, I hope; and now, if I may advise you, I would suggest that you work after this method in black and white only for eight or ten hours a week at least; that is, if you wish finally to be able to paint or model such heads as Madame Van der Heyden's."

Dora sighed.

"I quite agree with you," she said; "it has been a formidable interview, but chiefly for me."

He did not answer her; he only held out his hand and shook hers with a shade more cordiality than usual as they parted.

Then Miss Methuen sighed again.

"It will be like beginning all over again," she said. "I don't believe I shall ever have the patience. And as to ten hours

a week for black and white work, it's simply impossible."

Nevertheless, Monsieur Fusain noticed that Miss Methuen's afternoons in the studio were becoming more frequent and regular, and she herself found herself doing her best to remember and be guided by the rules which her self-constituted critic had given her so unexpectedly.

Now that he had fulfilled what he had condemned as an ill-advised promise, De Lastrin would fain have dismissed his cousin's concerns from his mind. To his great surprise, however, he found that his new interest still possessed a charm for him; that it was, in fact, merely stimulated by the consciousness of having given her valuable help. More than once he found himself carefully recapitulating all that he had said to her, and regretting that on certain points he had not been more explicit and diffuse, even wondering whether he was not in duty bound to complete what he had begun. Then he would shrug his shoulders at his unwonted enthusiasm, and try to convince himself that further interference would be unwarranted and unnecessary.

The upshot of it all being that one afternoon he rang again at Monsieur Fusain's door, asked for Miss Methuen, and heard with great inward satisfaction that she was to be found in the studio.

"My youthful taste for the fine arts is returning," he said, by way of apology, as he entered. "I hope you will tell me if you regret the fact."

No, Miss Methuen gave him to understand, with a gracious smile, that she did not regret it at all—that she was even glad to see him. He would now be able to see how much she had tried to follow his advice. Would he not paint something for her? It was such a pleasure to her to watch him. And Monsieur de Lastrin allowed himself to be persuaded, and while he painted he tried to say as much as possible of what he had omitted on the previous occasion. But Art, as the Latin grammars have it, is long, and the subject was by no means exhausted; and so it came about that the second visit led to a third, the third to a fourth, and so on, until it was an established thing for Monsieur de Lastrin to inspect and criticise Miss Methuen's work at least once a week.

"My dear Dora," said Madame Van der Heyden, one day late in March, "have you really come to see me again? I was beginning to think you had cut me."

"Don't scold me," laughed Dora. "I haven't meant to neglect any one, but I'm in every one's black books."

"So Lady Methuen told me; she excused you by saying," here the speaker gave a searching look at her companion, "that you put your studio work before everything. And now, my dear, will you tell me how you mean it to end?"

"How I mean what to end?"

"Don't be a little humbug! Of course I speak of your absorption in art—of De Lastrin's interest in you—of the hours you spend together. You seem to have brought him to his senses very effectually according to your threat. Now won't you tell me—first, how you managed it, and next, what the end is to be?"

"It didn't want much managing," replied Miss Methuen. "It was almost disappointingly easy. I scratched through a veneer of cynicism and found an artist of the first quality underneath—fancy that, Simonne—a sympathetic, high-souled artist, who might astonish the world if he chose."

"Yes, yes, that is all very well—and now the end of it?"

"The end will be that I shall go back to London a much more accomplished person than I left it."

"And what will become of the poor tame bear?" The colour deepened in the girl's cheek. "Shall you leave him without a leader?"

"The tame bear, as you call him," replied Dora, "is not so far tamed as to miss a leader very greatly."

"I should like to have a chance of judging that for myself," said the other. "By the way, what is this great card I have received from the Fusains? Shall I have to accept?"

"Of course you must accept. It is Monsieur Fusain's annual display of his pupils' performances. Half Brussels is asked. You must be there as an admirer of mine."

"And will De Lastrin be there, too?"

"Naturally," rejoined Dora, with an air of conviction.

"Then," replied Madame Van der Heyden, "I shall most certainly come as one of your admirers. I am sure your work of the last few months deserves admiration, though I am not referring to anything which Monsieur Fusain will enter on his catalogue, but to something which I shall take the liberty of calling 'Miss Methuen's Masterpiece.'"

Monsieur Fusain's annual soirée was the last private event of any importance, and this year it was to be unusually large. A pupil such as Miss Methuen, and the progress she had made nominally under his guidance, was the best recommendation his studio could set forth; on the night in question, therefore, the master's rooms were full to overflowing with a mixed medley of smart folks and folks very far from smart, artists and art students—the first denomination being so much in the minority that Madame Van der Heyden, arriving late and working her way painfully through the crush, found scarcely one congenial spirit until she came across Dora, who stood in front of her last painting, listening to a long speech from a celebrated Brussels portrait-painter. The artist bowed and went away.

"Pupil and work," said Madame Van der Heyden; "but where is the master?"

"There," said the girl, "in the doorway, talking to the Princesse de Chimay."

Simonne laughed.

"I didn't mean Fusain," she said. "Of course I was asking after De Lastrin. Why isn't he here?—for he isn't."

"How should I know?" rejoined Dora, with a touch of petulance.

It was not the first time during the evening that she had had to answer this question.

It was not easy to conceal a certain feeling of pique, as the evening wore on, and it had by degrees been made plain to her that the various little scenes which she had rehearsed for the astonishment of those who had never seen De Lastrin unbend, would not be enacted after all. He had accepted the invitation—that she knew. He had spoken to her of coming, and she felt his absence almost as a public slight.

"Well, if I'm not to see the performance of the tame bear, I shall withdraw," said Madame Van der Heyden. "I consider that I've been swindled of an hour of valuable time; there's no one here except yourself now the Princess has gone. Will you come with me?"

"How can I?" said Dora pettishly; "the pupils will not be expected to go until far later."

Then she withdrew into a little curtained alcove, from which she could see without being observed. She was watching and waiting for nothing, she tried to persuade herself, except for the people to go and for the evening to be over. Presently two artists paused near her.

"Quite a feather in Fusain's cap," said the one.

"I don't know about that," replied the other. "I hear that De Lastrin has been the real master."

"De Lastrin!" cried the first incredulously.

"Yes; I had it on the best authority—from Madame Fusain herself."

"Well, upon my word! What whim will he fix on next? Fancy him 'forming' a young lady student."

"Yes; and the joke is that Madame Fusain looked quite knowing over it, as if——"

Then they both laughed.

"How unspeakably comic!" was the reply. "Madame Fusain always was a ridiculous person."

Then they moved away.

So that was how people spoke of her, was it, thought Miss Methuen. How dare they? These men who talked so slightly of her cousin's whims—were they worthy to clean his palette for him? And as to Madame Fusain's surmises, they were impertinent, that she admitted, but ridiculous! What was there so ridiculous in the fact that she had roused a powerful soul from the torpor that had fallen on it? After all, had it not been her mission? Was not that proved by the footing on which her cousin had placed her with himself?

And then Miss Methuen found herself framing a dozen excuses for his absence on this great occasion. He was wise to have stayed away; it had been an unutterably dull evening. She would go away herself; there was nothing to stay for; she had had more than her share of compliments. Then, as she rose, her heart gave a great bound. She stood where she was for a moment, until she had steadied her thoughts; then, stretching out her hand, she said:

"I suppose you waited until the crush was over? You were very wise."

"It wasn't exactly for that reason," replied De Lastrin. "I think I only came because I felt bound, after all I had said."

He spoke in a preoccupied manner.

"Well, better late than never," she said gaily. "But now you are come I shall have to retail to you some of the pretty things that have been said to me, though I had rather you had heard them at first hand. Shall we sit down here?"

He obeyed her without much eagerness;

he did not seem particularly curious to hear of her success.

"I will begin with Monsieur Wauters," went on the girl, determined not to be chilled, "because he is the greatest man, and he said the finest things. His opinion is—now don't laugh—that I ought to go to Paris, study, and devote my life to art."

"Why should I laugh?" asked her cousin. "It is excellent advice. Why should you not follow it?"

"Why should I follow it?" rejoined Miss Methuen. "Why should I go to Paris, when I can get all I require in Brussels? I shall come back here next winter."

"And waste your time with Fusain, when you might be working under a greater master."

"I do not consider Monsieur Fusain has been my real master," she replied. "I am not coming back for the sake of what he will teach me." Then she broke off suddenly. "Gilbert," she cried, "why do you advise me to go to Paris?"

"In your own interests, ma cousine," he replied. "You have talent; there you will develop it."

"But you could help me to all I want to do. You are not tired of the trouble I have given you?"

"You honour me with too high an opinion," he said; "but even were I a competent guide for you, I should not be at your disposal next winter. I shall not be in Brussels."

"Not in Brussels? Where, then, shall you be?"

"I shall be in the Congo State," he answered quietly. "I have heard a great deal about it lately. The King has offered me a post; I have accepted it."

Miss Methuen's face was very pale.

"Gilbert," she exclaimed, "are you really going to exile yourself, to bury yourself in that——"

De Lastrin looked up in surprise.

"It will be no banishment," he interrupted; "it will be a shaking off of the wearisome old life; the beginning of a newer, brighter one, I hope; the solution of many of the difficulties which have harassed me so long."

Miss Methuen's dry tongue clove to the roof of her mouth; the words she sought would not form themselves. She stretched her hand out and laid it over his; he let it lie there unheeded. Then she spoke in a hoarse voice, which she hardly recognised herself.



"And when shall I see you again?"

"Possibly never," he replied.

"It is not possible," she cried passionately; "it is impossible! Gilbert, how dare you come and deal me such a cruel blow? Don't you understand?"

"I do not understand. I beg of you not to explain yourself in a way which you might afterwards regret."

"Ab, Gilbert," she cried piteously, "I must say it all now. It doesn't matter what you think. Why do you want to go to the Congo to begin a new life? Can't you begin a new life here? Haven't you begun one already? Oh, I have been so happy all these weeks and months, and I thought you were happy too!"

Her face was lifted to his, pale and tear-stained, her large eyes full of passionate pleading, her beautiful lips trembling. For a moment he hesitated, then drawing his hand from hers, he said:

"Dora, you are a child beginning life; there is a gulf between you and me which you cannot measure. Some time you will remember this and understand what I mean, perhaps, though on the whole we had far better forget it all. I shall probably not see you again. Shall we say good-bye now?"

"No!" she cried, "I shall never forget, nor will you, however hard you try. As to saying good-bye, I cannot say it."

She turned and laid her head against the wall behind her. When she looked up again she was alone, and was it her imagination, or was some one really singing with all its mocking beauty fully emphasized, "*Si tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime*"?

"It is all over," said Miss Methuen, half aloud, "there is nothing left of it but a hateful ghost;" and the weird music followed her down the stairs, a fitting requiem for the burial of her shattered dream.

It was the month of May, the merry month of May in Paris. The gay world was all agog in that pleasure-loving capital, and the Salon—an unusually good Salon, too, every one said—was crowded with visitors every afternoon.

"My dear Dora, you don't know how proud I am of myself and of you. It is the next most important thing to being an exhibitor oneself, to be ciceroned through the galleries by one of the most successful artists of the year."

It was Madame Van der Heyden who

said this, as she and Miss Methuen made their way slowly through the throng in the Palais de l'Industrie.

"I'm glad you appreciate the honour," replied Miss Methuen. "To think I have studied here for two years now, and how absurd the idea sounded to me when Wauters first suggested it at the Fusains' soirées!"

"I remember that soirée," said Madame Van der Heyden, with a sharp glance at her companion. "I was extremely disappointed because De Lastrin never appeared at it. By the way, dear, you might tell me how it was your tame bear turned wild again and rushed off to the jungles. Did you really refuse him?"

"I have told you before," replied Miss Methuen, "that I did not refuse him."

"And you have heard nothing of him since he went?"

"Nothing."

"He didn't stay in his senses long, dear."

Her companion made no reply.

"And your picture," began Madame Van der Heyden again, "your 'Jason Yoking the Fiery Oxen,' where does that come?"

"We are just reaching it; there it is."

"Dear me, and what a crowd round it! It will take us half an hour to work our way through. I wonder," she added slyly, "what De Lastrin will say of your success?"

"He will not hear of it."

"But, dear, it is in all the art journals."

"Art journals do not get so far as the Congo," said Miss Methuen.

"Not often, perhaps," replied Simonne, "but a chance one might; in fact, I may as well make a clean breast of it. You know that paragraph which appeared in the 'Beaux Arts' a few weeks before the Salon opened, speaking of your picture and Duran's approbation of it. Well, I took the liberty of marking the paragraph and sending the paper to your cousin."

"My dear Simonne, you didn't."

"My dear Dora, I did. I thought it would cheer his heart to see that his lucid interval had borne such excellent fruit."

By this time the two friends had so far penetrated the throng in front of the picture as to be able to see it. Lifting her glasses to her eyes, Madame Van der Heyden looked long and carefully at what, by universal consent, was pronounced one of the pictures of the year.

"Dora," she said at length, "of course

you know I'm no judge of how it's done. If your master is charmed, what is left for me to say? But one remark I must make, and that is: Where did you find that face for your Jason?"

"From my imagination," was Miss Methuen's somewhat curt reply.

"From your imagination," repeated her friend. "My dear, I should rather call it from your memory."

Miss Methuen's colour rose slightly.

"I don't understand you," she said.

"Yes, you do, my dear. Of course it is not patent to the general public; but I can see distinctly that in your Jason's face you have been painting De Lastrin; not as he really looks, but as he ought to look if you had succeeded in carrying out your benevolent idea of bringing him to his senses. Now, Dora, confess."

"There is nothing to confess," replied the girl stiffly.

And Madame Van der Heyden saw that there was an end of the subject.

"By the way, dear," she went on, "is it true that you have refused twenty thousand francs for this picture?"

"I did not paint it to sell," answered Miss Methuen. Then she looked hastily at her watch. "I had almost forgotten," she said, "that I have an appointment at the studio. The man who offered twenty thousand francs for this insists on giving me a commission. I don't want commissions, but I have consented to the interview."

"Some pertinacious American, no doubt," said Madame Van der Heyden. "Shall I come and give you my support?"

"If you please," replied Dora; and they left the gallery together.

Yes, the concierge said, there was a gentleman in the studio. He had given no name; he was waiting for mademoiselle.

Dora hurried upstairs, framing polite rejoinders to the probable pertinacity of her visitor. As she opened the studio door, however, she stood still on the threshold. The colour mounted to her face and then left her pale and trembling. It was Madame Van der Heyden who came to her rescue.

"Well, Marquis," she cried effusively, "this is a delightful surprise. We have just been talking of you as of a remote exile. Have you given up the jungles and savages altogether, or have you only come back to give commissions to popular artists?"

"I came back to see the Salon," replied De Lastrin, looking not at the speaker but at her cousin.

"You didn't!" cried Madame Van der Heyden triumphantly. "Now, I know my newspaper was at the bottom of this. Well, Dora, I suspect you can dispense with my support, as the troublesome American is only a myth. I bid you both good-bye for the present. By the way, Marquis, I hope you are not returning to the Congo again immediately?"

"I cannot say," replied De Lastrin; "it all depends."

Then Madame Van der Heyden laid her hands on Dora's shoulders, and, kissing her on either cheek, whispered:

"My dear, it all depends on how you put the last touch to your masterpiece."

"Dora," said De Lastrin, as her footsteps died away on the stairs, "I know I have no claim to be heard, but please let me speak. The new life I tried to live has been a total failure. From the first I felt that I had left something behind which I should never find again, and which I was unworthy to return to seek. I tried in vain to master the regret—to prove to myself that I had acted for the best. I have thought of you night and day. When I heard of your success, I felt that I must share it by coming to look at your picture. I meant to see it and then go back; but having seen it—having understood it—or am I mistaken——" He paused, and taking her hands drew her, unresisting, towards him. "We parted once without saying good-bye, Dora," he whispered. "I could not go this time without saying it."

For her answer she laid her head on his breast, and that was how Miss Methuen put the finishing touch to her masterpiece.

## THE THIRTEENTH BRYDAIN.

By MARGARET MOULE.

*Author of "Catherine Maidment's Burden," "Donest of Clergy," "Mr. Wingrove's Ways," "The Vicar's Aunt," "Dick's Wife," etc.*

### CHAPTER XXI.

THERE was a low sound, half a sigh and half a soft sob, from Etrenne, and then there was a silence. The conservatory was a large one; it ran, as has been said, along all one end of the drawing-room. It opened into a still larger fernery, full of every sort of ferns, large and small, rare and common; and through the very

middle of this ran a little stream, so contrived as to end in a miniature waterfall, the sound of which made a cool, musical cadence in the air. The conservatory itself was full of flowers, the heavy scent of which so filled the air that it would have been intoxicating in its sweetness if it had not been tempered by the cool, damp freshness of the fernery. Both were lighted by Chinese lanterns only; one of them hung just behind the chair in which Brydain had placed Etenne, and the soft light streamed down on her. She sat with her head bent very low and her hands lying on her lap. Her gown was of some sort of brocaded silk, which caught the faint light; it was made in a quaint, picturesque way which seemed to accentuate all the beauty of her figure and face. She looked so small, so lovely, and so shrinking, that it was all Brydain could do to refrain from catching her in his arms, as he looked at her and waited for her answer.

Her answer did not come. Her pretty head bent lower and lower, but she did not speak. Brydain, unable to endure the suspense, came a step nearer.

"Etenne," he said again, and his voice was low and trembling; "Etenne, do you love me? Will you marry me?"

She raised her head slowly. "I—do not know," she said as falteringly as if she had been seventeen, and was listening, frightened, to her first proposal. In truth, Etenne was frightened. Brydain's words were to her, in reality, her first proposal. None of the men who had before this asked her to marry them had asked her as Brydain was asking her now. To none of them had it seemed to make much difference when she said no. But Brydain's tone and look had gone to her inmost heart, and told her that to him his whole life would be made or marred by her answer. She was frightened lest the feeling which she had owned to herself on the night of the party that she possessed for Brydain should not be strong enough, or real enough, to grow into a fit return to this love which was offered her with a passion of which, though Brydain had used no passionate words, Etenne felt the force.

"You do not know?" repeated Brydain. "You know if you love me. Do you love me? Could you ever love me?"

He stretched out his hand as he spoke, and half mechanically bent towards him in his agitation a small branch of a lemon

verbena that grew near. The twig broke off with a short snap, and Brydain seized it and twisted it in his restless hands. He crushed the leaves remorselessly as he handled it, and their strong, sweet scent came out. Unknown to her, the scent entered Etenne's consciousness, and all her life afterwards she, when she smelt it, saw Brydain as she saw him then, eager, pleading, pale with suspense.

For a moment, she thought she would say "Yes," and let him teach her afterwards to love him as he loved her. Then a sudden flash of reaction came. She dared not rush into the acceptance of what she might never be able to return. She could not feel certain about her feelings. It would always be a strong, even an intense liking, but would it ever be love—such love as he deserved?

"I like you better than any one else in the world," she answered; "and," she went on hesitatingly, while the face she lifted a very little grew scarlet to the margin of her pretty hair with intense blushes, "I believe I love you, but I'm not sure if I love you enough— Oh, I'm so sorry—so very sorry," she went on hurriedly, as Brydain's face grew whiter and very drawn. "May I have time—time to think a little? May I tell you in a little while?"

"You shall do what you like, if only you do not say no—if only I may ask you again," he said, in a low, concentrated voice.

"I'll tell you," she said eagerly; "oh, I'll tell you, myself, if you will let me have a little time."

Brydain's face changed; some of its drawn look faded, and though it still possessed a look of strained suspense, there was a slight spark of hope in his eyes.

"Then I may hope?" he said. "You will—you will try to love me?" he added, after a moment's pause, in a sort of parenthesis, pathetic in its intense eagerness. "I love you with all my heart and soul," he ended.

The last words were spoken with a burning force and reality which very nearly made Etenne take back all her reserves, and throw away every other consideration, and answer him recklessly then and there. But he spoke again before the impulse had grown beyond an impulse:

"May I ask you, then?" he began hesitatingly.

"I will send you my answer, if you will let me," she said. "I will send it as soon as ever I can. May I have a week—two weeks?" she added; and her voice was trembling with her agitation. "Please do not think it unkind of me. I don't mean to be; oh, I don't mean to be!" she ended, raising her face completely now. The lovely grey eyes were swimming in tears, and the blushes chased each other over her brow. Brydain stooped hastily, and catching up her hand, which was trembling now, he kissed it with passionate lips, and then abruptly turned and left her.

He went back into the crowded, brilliant drawing-room, feeling as if the scene around him were all unreal and imaginary—as if nothing were real but that dim corner in the conservatory where he had left Etrenne.

The same sense of unreality surrounded him all the rest of the evening. He talked to his hostess for some time. She was a clever, pleasant woman, who, being well connected and possessing a very rich husband, knew every one in London worth knowing. She was given to enthusiasms of varying sorts. Her present and most engrossing enthusiasm was for music and musical people of every kind. She was, therefore, inclined to make much of Brydain, and did so to her heart's content. Brydain was perfectly passive. He talked, that is to say he answered all her questions, and there was nothing unusual about his voice or manner. The step he had just taken was too tremendous in its bearing on his whole life to affect his outward demeanour. He was feeling inwardly, with every breath he drew, that he had braved his fate. He had tried to win his bride; and the result must be waited for in stern patience. Mr. Lennard, who came in, later, to the reception into which the dinner-party developed, thought vaguely, as he talked to Brydain for a few moments, that he was "rather quiet"; but he thought no more.

Brydain moved about the rooms, talked, even laughed, and greeted those people he knew with a self-repression which was almost severe in its quiet calm. His eyes carefully watched whatever corner of the room Etrenne happened to be in, and he kept away from it, though by no means pointedly, yet very carefully. He did not wish to make either of them conspicuous; but he did not feel that he could look at that lovely face again, if he were to bear

his waiting calmly. So the remaining time during which it was necessary to stay drifted by, and Brydain found himself free to go. He made his farewells to his hostess, and found himself with a keen feeling of relief, a moment later, out in the street—alone.

The May sky was serene and lovely. The moon was new, and the stars were shining with the quiet steadiness which has quieted and tranquillised many a mind before Brydain's. The peaceful beauty affected him instantly, and he leant back in his hansom, and watched the sky with a mind almost at rest. It was almost twelve o'clock when he reached home. He expected to find his room in darkness, and determined that he would sit down in that darkness and think it all over in the lonely quiet.

He went slowly upstairs and opened the door. To his surprise, a bright stream of light came out; to his further surprise—for he had ordered nothing of the sort—supper was laid on the table, and as he came in some one flung down a novel and rose from the easy-chair, and Tredennis's voice said cheerily:

"Well, old fellow, I'm a surprise! I hope a pleasant surprise. I've been waiting since nine for you. Just as well I have, apparently," he muttered to himself.

Brydain, without a word of greeting, sank down heavily in the opposite chair. For the first time since he waked from his dream of happiness on the night before, or, rather, the early morning of this same day, physical exhaustion made itself felt. The intensity of the mental experiences he had been through had kept off any feeling of the sort till now. But now he suddenly felt as if he could neither answer Tredennis nor move hand or foot again. With characteristic readiness Tredennis got some brandy and made Brydain take some, during which process he commented not at all on the situation. But as Brydain, with a returning colour and a long gasp, set the glass down, Tredennis said:

"Well, and what does all this mean? The old girl was not far wrong," he added under his breath.

On Tredennis's first arrival and enquiry for Brydain, he had, of course, received the information that he was out, and he was just going away when the landlady had come out into the passage and intimated that she would be glad if she might speak to him. Thereupon had ensued an account of Brydain's proceedings during



the day, terminating with the oracular words :

"You mark my words, sir. I've had a deal of experience ; and if he ain't ill, he's a-goin' out of his mind."

The result of this colloquy was that Tredennis, though taking this statement with a grain of salt, was a good deal disturbed in his mind, and resolved to wait for Brydain and look into things for himself. He had also, on learning that Brydain had had, as the landlady said, "nothink as I knows on to eat," ordered that supper should be prepared.

Of this he proposed to make Brydain partake ; but naturally he wished first for some enlightenment, and to that end propounded the aforesaid comprehensive query.

Brydain drew another long breath by way of answer, and got up from his chair only to sit down again directly.

"What a fool I am !" he muttered.

"Doubtless," remarked Tredennis drily ; "but I should wish for detail ! What have you been doing, pray, since we met at the Kingstons' party ? It is only twenty-four hours ago, and you seem to have been doing a good deal."

"Tredennis," said Brydain, in a voice that made Tredennis draw himself upright in the chair to which he had returned, "I have asked Etrenne Farrant to marry me."

"You have !" was the amazed and half incredulous response. "Tell me about it this instant. No ; come on and have some supper first, and tell me about it after."

"I'll tell you now," said Brydain slowly.

#### CHAPTER XXII.

TREDENNIS went away from Brydain's rooms nearly two hours later in a very curious and unusual frame of mind. It was so unusual and inconsistent that it almost disconcerted him. Brydain had told him the whole story, from his feelings after the party to the moment when Etrenne asked for time in the conservatory ; and it was his manner in the telling that had produced this frame of mind in Tredennis. It was not exactly a feeling of awe ; Tredennis's practical mind and steady reason rendered him more or less incapable of receiving such a sensation. It was not surprise ; it was not excitement or pleasure. It was intangible and indefinable ; the only way in which it can possibly be expressed is by saying that Tredennis felt as if something altogether out of his scheme

of life had touched him ; as if in passing close to a dark shadow a sort of cloudy emanation from the shadow had crept into his own clear horizon.

With Brydain's stern account of the way in which he had taken Tredennis's advice, defied his fate, and asked Etrenne Farrant to be his wife, a moment of inexplicable reaction came to Tredennis. It was as if, with Brydain's resolute defiance of it, Tredennis for a moment realised the influence of the shadow under which Brydain lived. He was not susceptible to its influence. By his nature it was impossible that he ever should have been, even in Brydain's place. But he saw how it affected Brydain's life, and the glimpse thus obtained affected him to an unaccountable degree, and he could not wholly get rid of the sensation it left with him. He was further rendered uneasy, and even anxious, from a more tangible point of view, by Brydain's manner. His stern self-repression, the absolute self-control, and the determined hand with which he held himself in, as he spoke, alarmed Tredennis. They were all so utterly contrary to his usual self, that their very presence showed Tredennis how shaken and unnerved he must really be by the struggle he had gone through ; and showed him, also, how tremendous that struggle had been.

With these thoughts in his mind about Brydain, the prospect of the suspense before his friend added greatly to Tredennis's anxiety for him.

He thought it all anxiously over as he went home, and the outcome of his thoughts and his own unaccountable frame of mind was, as he reached his staircase, a very strong expression of his anger towards Etrenne Farrant. And he coupled it with a resolution to keep what he called "an extra sharp look-out" on Brydain.

The days that followed were very heavy and hard days for Brydain. He was under the influence of two strong strains, each of which told upon and contended with the other. There was first of all the suspense. This was in itself almost unbearable to a man of his temperament. He was impulsive, and he must restrain his impulses ; he was impatient, and the necessity for the utmost patience was laid upon him ; he was absorbed in the prospect before him, and he must daily take his mind away, and concentrate it on other and wholly unconnected interests.

To crown all, he was as passionately in love as a man of this disposition who has never loved before, and who was loving now with all his unused force, has ever been; and he could not speak to, or touch, or even be with the object of his love. But this Brydain might have borne, had it been the only strain he had to bear. He was strong, and he could have gathered all his strength together and faced these days, and borne both the suspense and the possible blow which might come at the end of it as a strong man should, had it not been for the counter-influence of the other strain, and that other strain was the constant presence in his thoughts of the doom he had braved and defied. He had braved it, and he had defied it, and probably if Etenne Farrant had answered him yes at once, he would have completely put it away, conquered it, and let it overshadow his life no more. But in the dim uncertainty in which he stood, it grew daily, almost hourly, more terrible to contemplate. He grew in these waiting days afraid of what he had done; afraid to contemplate what he had defied; almost afraid of the day that might bring him Etenne's consent to marry him. By his very defiance he seemed sometimes to have intensified the power over him of his doom a hundred-fold. Then again he thought that if only Etenne loved him and would marry him, their love could stand against any and everything. With that he came back to the longing to hear either of her refusal or her consent; and thus the two strains acted and reacted, and intensified the one the other until Brydain, for all the stern outward composure of his demeanour, was nearly crushed beneath them.

The whole position was accentuated by the fact that he had to meet Etenne. More than once during these next few days chance threw them together in the same rooms at a party, and each time Brydain caught a glimpse of her lovely face, or, possibly, only the outline of her pretty dark head, he found himself torn in two between his intense longing to speak to her and the strong, chivalrous instinct to keep out of her way lest she should imagine that he wished to press or hurry her into an answer.

Once they were so placed, near a door in a temporary crush, that the necessity for speech was imperative. Etenne held out her hand with a deep blush. Brydain took it with the commonplace greeting; that was all he could speak, and then the

stream of human life swept them apart again, leaving Brydain with all his hopes and all his fears doubled by the momentary contact. Meantime, his daily work had to go on as usual. One of the concerts at which he was engaged to sing was to come off in the next week. He was practising very hard, taking his lessons, and preparing for this and future concerts all day and every day. He worked at all this, if possible, harder than he had ever worked as yet.

Dr. Kingston, who, disquieted by Rachel's account, had dropped in upon his nephew unexpectedly as soon as he could find a spare half-hour, gave him, together with prescriptions, very strong advice on the absolute duty of taking care of his health, and Mr. Lennard, over and over again, warned him, first cynically, then earnestly, of the injury he would certainly do his voice by overtaxing his strength.

But Brydain worked on with a feverish eagerness which seemed to be the only outward expression of his longings and his dread.

In this way the week after his proposal to Etenne passed, and the day of the concert came. It was to be held in a private house in Grosvenor Place, and Brydain was walking across the Park to it. He was not alone; Tredennis was with him. Tredennis had made an effort to accompany him, an effort which was by no means the first of the kind he had made of late. During these days he had spent every available moment with Brydain, and had done all another man could do to "see him through," as he expressed it.

It was a lovely day. The air was soft and hot with the softest heat of May, and there was a fresh breeze that brought with it strong wafts of sweet growing scents; and Tredennis congratulated himself on the result of his suggestion that they should walk rather than drive when he saw the slight colour that came into Brydain's face with the air.

He talked as much as possible, both to distract Brydain's mind from his own affairs and to keep him from dwelling on the nervousness which was still inevitable to him before a concert. But the talk was spasmodic and continued with great difficulty, caused by monosyllabic answers on Brydain's part. Finally, he contrived to interest Brydain in an intricate point of law—a detail in a case he was working up. He skilfully so presented this to Brydain as to call out the latter's opinion perforce.

This was contrary to his own; and an argument ensued, which Tredennis kept going as long as possible, and only let fall when they were almost within sight of Grosvenor Place. It was succeeded by a silence—a silence during which Tredennis was occupied with a thought that had just occurred to him—the thought that Etrenne Farrant might possibly be at the concert. Tredennis naturally enough thought Etrenne Farrant heartless, and disliked her more and more as day by day went by. His feelings regarding her were all the stronger for the repression of them he had to practise with Brydain.

As they went up the steps of the house which was their destination, he was conscious of two ardent hopes only; the first, that Etrenne would not be present; the second, that if she were, she might escape Brydain's eyes.

At the head of the staircase they parted, Brydain to go to the artists' room, and Tredennis to his place among the audience.

He gave a quick glance round the room before he sat down, but Etrenne Farrant was not there; and Tredennis, having watched every arrival until the concert began, settled himself down peacefully, in comparative content, to listen to the music. His listening continued fairly placidly, interspersed with much anxious thought on Brydain's affairs, until the moment for Brydain's own appearance occurred. At that very instant Tredennis became sensible of a slight bustle at the door behind him. Looking round, he saw Etrenne Farrant come in with a party of friends. She was wearing a light and rather conspicuous dress, and more than one person seemed attracted by her appearance. There was a little delay in finding the places wanted, and when Brydain came on Etrenne was still standing up, waiting, and Tredennis's watching eyes saw Brydain's catch sight of the pretty erect figure, saw him start slightly, and saw his face change as he unrolled his music. He began to sing firmly, and in quite his usual manner, however, and Tredennis, listening with strained attention, felt momentarily reassured as to his self-possession. But at the first pause, Brydain, with a white face, stretched out his hand and caught hold of his accompanist's chair.

For an instant Tredennis, watching him, thought he was going to break down; and he had seldom felt keener relief in his whole life than when Brydain began the

second verse. He sang it through faultlessly, but the grip which he kept on the chair told Tredennis of the effort it was costing him to do so.

The moment it was over, Tredennis, without staying to listen to the applause, started up, and made the best of his way to the artists' room. There he found Brydain leaning back in a chair, white and exhausted. There was a little group around him which fell back a little at Tredennis's entrance. Mr. Lennard formed one of the group. He turned to Tredennis with an expression of relief.

"Here! I must go on," he said; "come you and see after this fainting fool of a fellow! Will nothing give him common sense?"

An hour later Tredennis, who had conveyed Brydain home, was sitting opposite to him, looking at him in a thoughtful silence which had lasted since they came in, when Brydain unexpectedly broke it.

"I suppose I've overworked a bit," he said heavily.

"Overworked or overworried," was the brusque response. "Brydain," continued Tredennis, "I think you ought to be reasonable after making an exhibition of yourself like this."

"I'm reasonable enough," was the weary answer.

"Prove it, then, and listen to me." Tredennis had an idea in his head which he intended to put to the test at once, on the principle of "striking while the iron was hot." "You must take a holiday, man," he continued; "do you hear?"

"Holiday!" said Brydain, roused to irritation, "how can I? What nonsense you talk, Ted!"

"I beg your pardon, I do not talk nonsense. It's the only reasonable thing to be done. The nonsense is on your side when you fancy you can go on like this."

"Tredennis"—Brydain spoke with the slowness of one who is putting his arguments into the fewest possible words—"I've got these engagements on, and how can I leave town while I'm waiting? How can you propose it?"

The last few words were spoken with some hesitation and irritation, which was evidently only restrained from being anger by Brydain's physical weariness.

"I can propose it, and I do propose it," was the instant answer. "You must go, and at once. You've got a clear fortnight."

"I can't," Brydain said. "I can't go away when she's going to—tell me. I—I can't possibly, and if I could, what would she think of me, Ted, pray?"

Into Tredennis's quick brain there flashed the idea of a lever which might be all-powerful in gaining his end of getting Brydain away from London. He proceeded to use it without a moment's delay.

"I think," he began, "that that is one of the strongest reasons in favour of your going. Don't you see, it is very trying for her to have to see you, and to meet you over and over again as she has done, and must do again, before she answers you? It would be infinitely better and kinder, I should say, to take yourself out of her way, and let her think it over in peace."

To his great satisfaction, Tredennis's lever seemed to be about to work. Brydain did not answer immediately, and when he did there was reflection and consideration in his tone.

"Do you really think so?" he said. "Do you really believe it would be better and easier for her if I were out of the way?"

"Of course it would," was the decided answer.

There was a little silence, and then Brydain said slowly:

"Well, if you think I ought to look at it like that, I will go. I might manage ten days."

"I knew you'd see it in the right light," answered Tredennis, in a tone from which

he had great difficulty in keeping out his triumphant feeling. "And now, the question is, where? I only wish I could go with you," he added.

"You can't possibly get away, I suppose, even for five or six days?"

"No," was the somewhat rueful answer. "I can't anyhow manage it with Kempthorpe's case on my hands."

"Well, if I've got to go by myself, I shall just go to Brydain for a week, I think."

"To Brydain?" said Tredennis doubtfully, after a moment's thought. "It's rather lonely for you, isn't it? I should try a week in Paris."

"Out of this crowd into that crowd! No, thank you! It's quiet enough at Brydain; and, since you drive me out of town, I shall just go there and have a week's peace, Tredennis," Brydain added in a different tone. "I could write to her and ask her to send her answer there, couldn't I? Just a line, you know. She couldn't think that troubling her?"

"Certainly not. Send it by all means," Tredennis answered readily.

And then Brydain, with the sudden energy of an impulsive temperament, got up, and collecting his writing materials, wrote two notes—one, the briefest line, to let Etienne Farrant know his address; the other, to Mackenzie to announce his intended coming. Tredennis, meanwhile, sat and mused on the turn affairs had taken. He wished Brydain would go anywhere else than to Brydain.

#### NOTE.

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